

### Useful links and places:

#### -Catholic Worker Websites:

[www.catholicworker.com](http://www.catholicworker.com)  
[www.catholicworker.org](http://www.catholicworker.org)  
[www.lacatholicworker.org](http://www.lacatholicworker.org)  
[www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker](http://www.ca.geocities.com/vancouvercatholicworker)  
[www.catholicworker.com/bookstore/index.html](http://www.catholicworker.com/bookstore/index.html)  
[www.cjd.org](http://www.cjd.org)

#### -Radical/Progressive Christianity

[www.jesusradicals.org](http://www.jesusradicals.org)  
[www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com](http://www.nonviolentjesus.blogspot.com)  
[www.geezmagazine.org](http://www.geezmagazine.org)  
[www.catholicanarchy.org](http://www.catholicanarchy.org)  
[www.anglocatholicism.org](http://www.anglocatholicism.org)  
[www.tierra-nueva.org](http://www.tierra-nueva.org)  
[www.romancatholicwomenpriests.com](http://www.romancatholicwomenpriests.com)  
[www.desertwisdom.org/dttw](http://www.desertwisdom.org/dttw)

#### -Anti-War

[www.stopwar.ca](http://www.stopwar.ca)  
[www.ivaw.net](http://www.ivaw.net)  
[www.serve.com/nukeresister](http://www.serve.com/nukeresister)  
[www.resisters.ca](http://www.resisters.ca)  
[www.wri-irg.org](http://www.wri-irg.org)  
[www.plowsharesactions.org](http://www.plowsharesactions.org)  
[www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)

#### -Activism

[www.foodnotbombs.net](http://www.foodnotbombs.net)  
[www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/citizens-handbook)  
[www.iww.org](http://www.iww.org)  
[www.deathpenalty.org](http://www.deathpenalty.org)  
[www.freegan.info/?page=home](http://www.freegan.info/?page=home)  
[www.justicia4migrantworkers.org](http://www.justicia4migrantworkers.org)  
[www.drivemovement.org](http://www.drivemovement.org)  
[www.streamsofjustice.org](http://www.streamsofjustice.org)

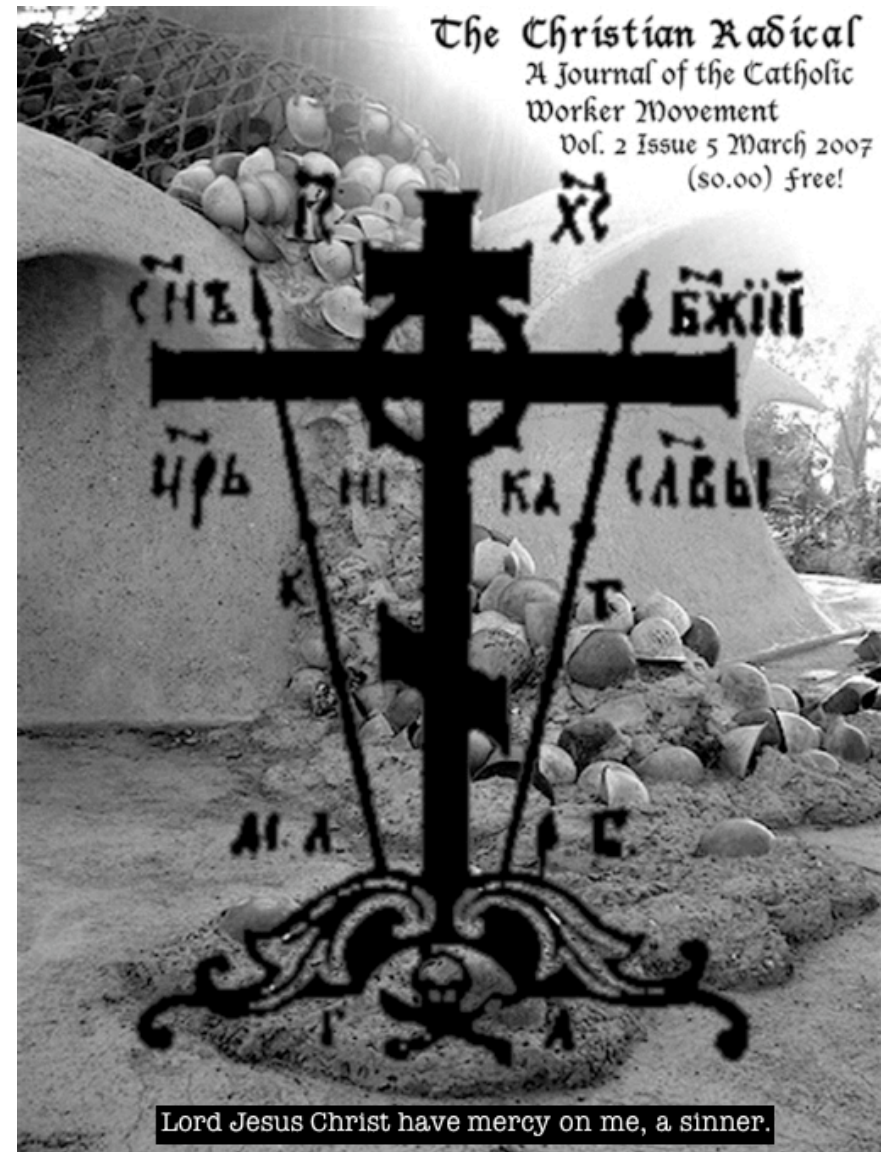
#### -Other Good Websites:

[www.vancouverdiy.com](http://www.vancouverdiy.com)  
[www.pcac.net/indexn.html](http://www.pcac.net/indexn.html) (Palestinian Child Arts Centre)  
[www.southcentralfarmers.com](http://www.southcentralfarmers.com)  
[www.commongroundrelief.org](http://www.commongroundrelief.org)  
[www.teachingforpeace.org](http://www.teachingforpeace.org)  
[www.jonahhouse.org](http://www.jonahhouse.org)  
[www.primitivism.com](http://www.primitivism.com)

### The Christian Radical

A Journal of the Catholic  
Worker Movement

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## A PRAYER FOR LENT

*The Prayer of Saint Ephraim the Syrian is traditionally said many times throughout each day during Great Lent, in addition to our daily prayers.*

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, faintheartedness, lust of power, and idle talk. (+)

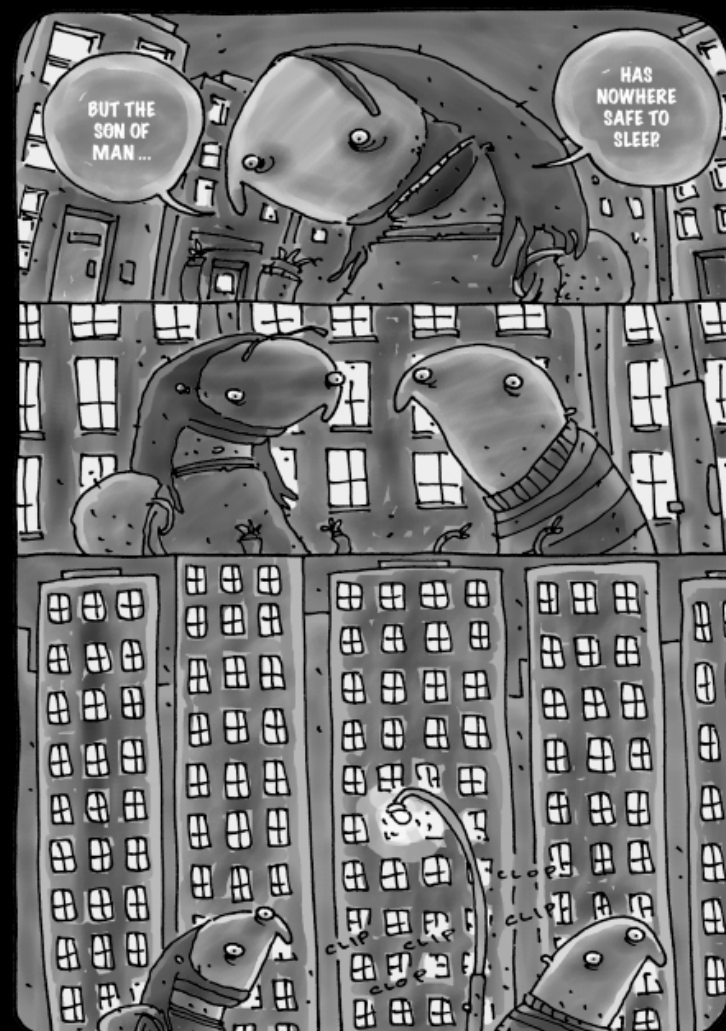
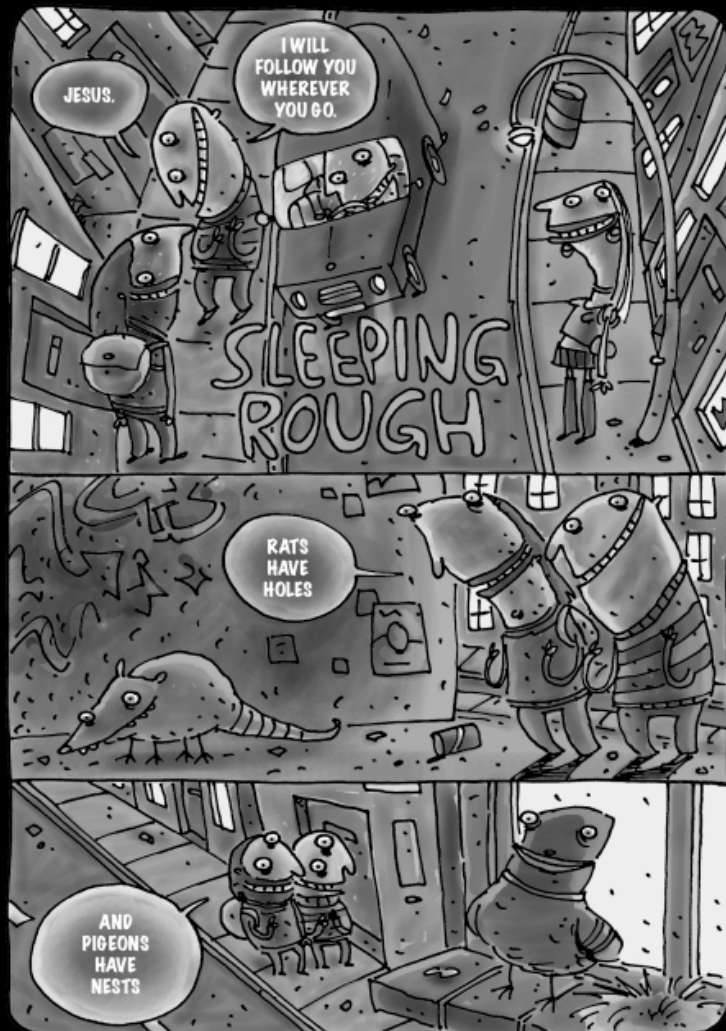
But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love to your servant. (+)

Yes, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own sin and not to judge my brother, for You are blessed from all ages to all ages. Amen. (+)

*(The "(+)" indicates that those praying make a deep bow or prostration at this point.)*

## Table of Contents:

- Sleeping Rough a comic by Dean Rankine
- An Easy Essay by Peter Maurin
- Apatheia, a poem by James Mullin
- Father Forgive us... by Chris Rooney
- Anarchy Vs. The Rule of Law by Tavis Dodds
- The Church Called to Repentance quotes from +Oscar Romero
- Capital Punishment and Killing by Nikolai Berdyaev
- A Call to Action By Steven Woods
- Liberty and Justice for All by Logan Laituri
- Missing the Point by J. Barrett Lee
- We Believe So We Speak
- Useful Links and Resources





## What the Catholic Worker Believes

By Peter Maurin, founder of the movement

The Catholic Worker believes in the gentle personalism of traditional Catholicism.

The Catholic Worker believes in the personal obligation of looking after the needs of our brother.

The Catholic Worker believes in the daily practice of the Works of Mercy.

The Catholic Worker believes in Houses of Hospitality for the immediate relief of those who are in need.

The Catholic Worker believes in the establishment of Farming Communes where each one works according to his ability and gets according to his needs.

The Catholic Worker believes in creating a new society within the shell of the old with the philosophy of the new, which is not a new philosophy but a very old philosophy,

a philosophy so old that it looks like new.

## Apatheia

By James Mullin

Those who have contempt for the poor and the weak  
I am contemptuous of.

Those who despise the pure of heart  
I despise.

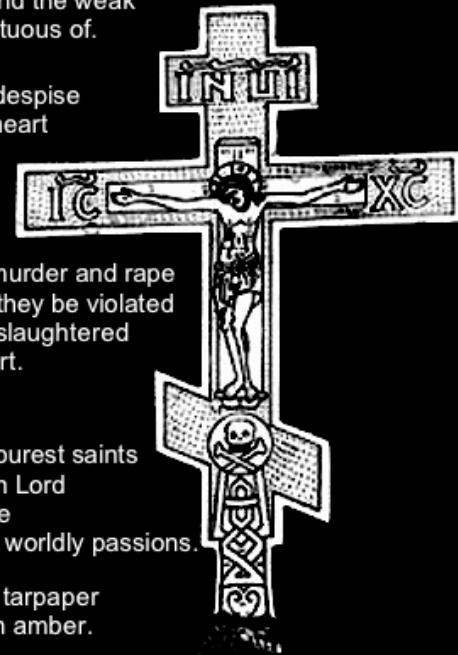
Those who murder and rape  
I desire that they be violated  
their bodies slaughtered  
and torn apart.

Yet even the purest saints  
without you oh Lord  
would collapse  
under sin and worldly passions.

Flies on tarpaper  
wasps in amber.

Father, forgive us we know not what we do.

Lord Jesus Christ,  
Son of God  
why do you have mercy on me?



## Father Forgive us, we know not what we do.

By Chris Rooney

The title to this essay is a familiar sounding one. Christ cries out something very close to this from the cross at the end of Luke's Gospel. I come back to that plea so very often these days. It comes to mind when I read about troop increases; it comes to mind when I hear about the Canadian government's immigration detention centre in Kingston and the three Muslims within it's walls who have been on hunger strike for two months and are being held on evidence they can't access or contest. I pray this prayer when I read about the opening of Camp #6 at Guantanamo Bay and how the prisoners there will spend the rest of their lives living in conditions of total isolation with no human contact and no hope of being released or--like the men on hunger strike in Kingston--of knowing why they are there to begin with. I pray this prayer whenever I hear about my friend Steven who is in identical conditions of total isolation, waiting to die in a Texas prison cell - himself hunger striking with others there for the restoration of humane living conditions while they await their executions. When I pass by the victims of class violence and addiction on my way to work, or when I hear about the Israeli apartheid wall, and when I read of wars and rumours of wars to come this prayer is on my lips.

*"Forgive them Father, they know not what they do"*

It's because of all these horrors new and old that I have started to reflect on the possibilities in Christ's petition to His Father for forgiveness. As a child in Sunday school and many years later as a young convert to Catholicism I never really gave it much thought, I always sort of assumed that it was a plea meant immediately - if not exclusively - for the Romans and the Judeans, the thief who mocked Him and the legionnaires who cast lots for His clothes. I never thought when I was young that He might have been praying as much for His Apostles and disciples, or even for the entire world throughout the lengthening halls of history. Yet this is the only way that I can read that line any more.

I wrote on my blog once that the peace that passes all understanding is the peace that is extended to the one who strikes us repeatedly even as they reach to strike us again. And that is what the gospels call us to practice as Christians. That's what our principles demand of us as peace activists. That's what the lives of people like Jesus of Nazareth, Martin Luther King, Ammon Hennacy, Mohandas Ghandi, and the kid who stood in front of the tank in Tiananmen Square inspire. Yet it's for even the saints that Christ prays this from the cross.

*"Forgive them Father, they know not what they do"*

The Romans didn't know or care that the man they nailed to the cross was the Son of God, the Judeans — his brothers and sisters — didn't believe and insisted on empty signs which they had already received without number yet still hadn't convinced them. Blessed Augustine in writing the Just War Theory, the Pope at Vatican I who declared himself infallible, Max Webber when he wrote The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, even the president of the United States — a self avowed Christian—seems all too ready to leave this cry within the pages of a book on his bedside table. And so do many other people, myself all too often included. When I speak violently or in anger, when I eat something I'm sure came from a factory farm, when I go shopping for clothes or refuse to give a starving man the change in my pocket, when I refuse to speak out though I know something is wrong I am leaving Christ inside of a book.

What am I getting at here?  
none of us come close to  
Kingdom, though it is within

I guess what I'm saying is that  
the realisation of God's  
the hearts of everyone

regardless of faith or ideal, still none of us is very good at bringing it forth all the time. And it's as we collectively face the horrors of our own design that this cry reaches my ears and echoes in my soul.

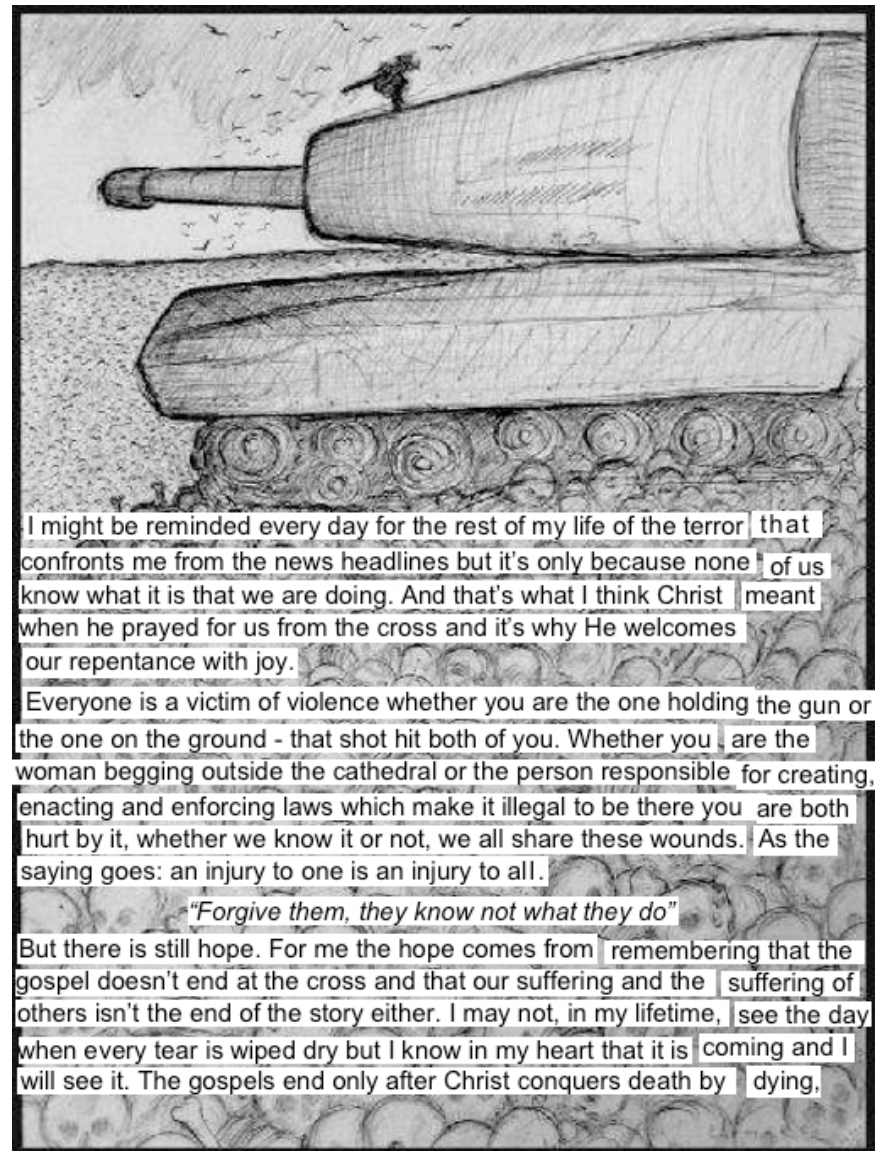
*"Forgive them Father, they know not what they do"*



None of us really know what we are doing. We might have very definite plans, we might be doing our very best and working from the best of intentions yet still we can never claim to really know what affect our lives have on those around us. To the centurions in Jerusalem they were carrying out orders to execute a subversive, someone involved—to them—in the muddy waters of Judean politics and a foreign theology, another “messiah” who could one day try and lead yet another armed revolt against the Roman occupation. Something similar could be said of the soldiers who destroyed Fallujah and Najaf. The architects of the Patriot Act, and the people in the Canadian government who sold out Maher Arar didn’t know what they were doing, and for that matter neither do you or I. My writing this could have no effect on the world around me, and yet there is always the possibility that it could have implications beyond the scope of my imagination, both for good and for ill.

A word said in anger or in jest to a friend might hit them harder than you expect and leave them hurting while you forget the incident. That kid you picked on in elementary school could have been so impacted that it shaped the rest of his or her life. The gas in your car, the sweater on my back, the coffee or the fruit juice in our cups, all of these things could have been paid for in someone’s blood, and probably were. I guess what it comes down to in the end is this: whether through good intentions, bad intentions or no intentions at all, each and every one of us, as well as every living person who came before us, and all who come after us, until the end of the age, are complicit in the manufacture of a world where every luxury is born out of the suffering and death of billions, and still billions more are ready to sell their very souls to bathe in that blood.

Saint and sinner, Atheist, and Imam, and the guy on the street, we’ve all helped build it, been born into it, and most of the time feel helpless to do anything about it. That’s if we think about it at all. That’s why I remind myself that the prayer from the cross was directed at everybody. I may be incapable of avoiding sweatshop labour; factory farmed and genetically modified food, the sorrow of learning about friends who’ve chosen to join the armed forces or the violence done to those in prisons.

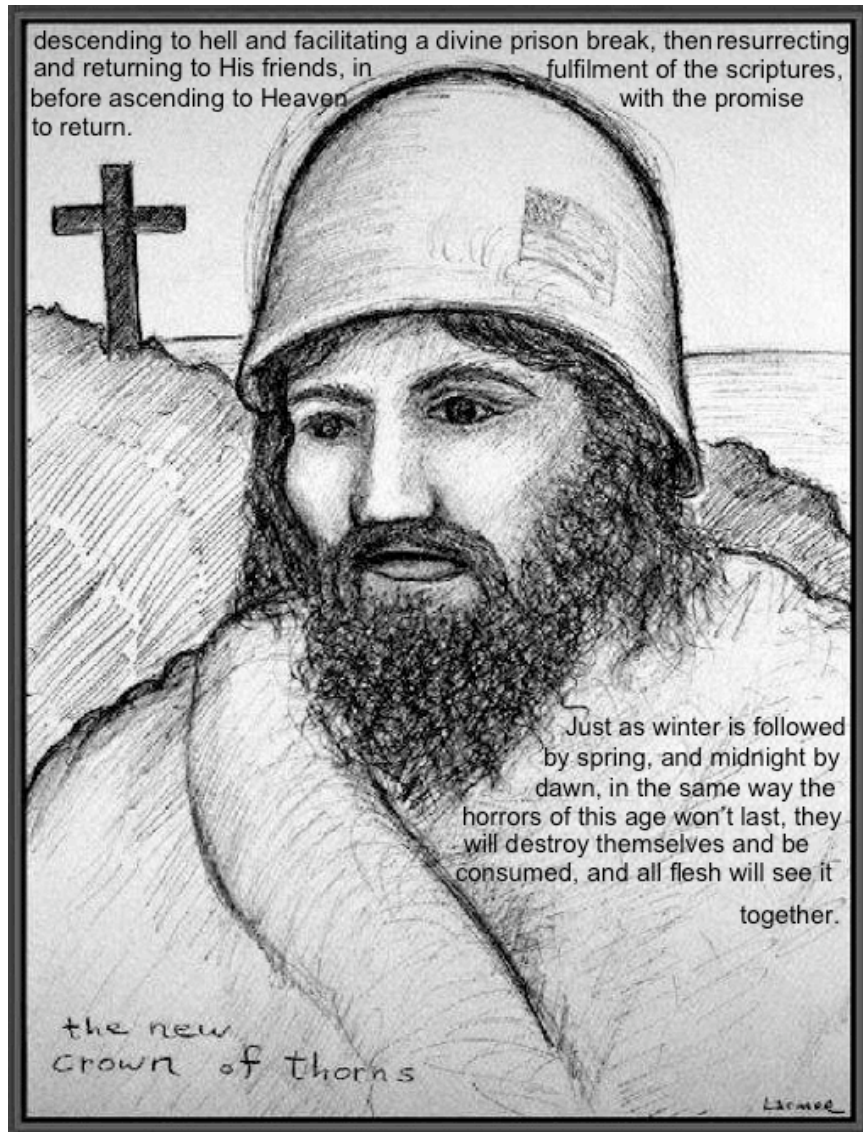


I might be reminded every day for the rest of my life of the terror that confronts me from the news headlines but it's only because none of us know what it is that we are doing. And that's what I think Christ meant when he prayed for us from the cross and it's why He welcomes our repentance with joy.

Everyone is a victim of violence whether you are the one holding the gun or the one on the ground - that shot hit both of you. Whether you are the woman begging outside the cathedral or the person responsible for creating, enacting and enforcing laws which make it illegal to be there you are both hurt by it, whether we know it or not, we all share these wounds. As the saying goes: an injury to one is an injury to all.

*"Forgive them, they know not what they do"*

But there is still hope. For me the hope comes from remembering that the gospel doesn't end at the cross and that our suffering and the suffering of others isn't the end of the story either. I may not, in my lifetime, see the day when every tear is wiped dry but I know in my heart that it is coming and I will see it. The gospels end only after Christ conquers death by dying.



## Anarchy Versus the Rule of Law: In Memory of Harriet Nehanee

Tavis W. Dodds

A little old lady has died and her death is a screaming wake up call that her kind are an endangered species humanity cannot afford to lose. Harriet Nehanee, 79-year-old hereditary chief of the Squamish Nation, social activist and great grandmother, passed away Saturday February 24<sup>th</sup> in the Intensive Care Unit of Saint Paul's Hospital. Nehanee had been among the Eagleridge Bluff demonstrators that had been forcefully removed from the West Vancouver area developed for the Sea to Sky Highway. Nehanee was sentenced to two weeks due to her part in the demonstration, a part that included returning to Eagle Ridge and contravening a court order that the developer had been able to convince the courts to enact. Madam Justice Brown sentenced Nehanee to Surrey pre-trial, cells used mostly for people recently arrested, a lot of them suffering from severe health conditions, and in the week Nehanee served in pretrial there were enormous sweeps of drug industry victims sent to Surrey Pretrial. It must have been full of people going through various stages of withdrawal. Time spent in pre-trial is ten times as hard as time in a normal prison. There is no communal area in pretrial, only cells. Friends of Nehanee wrote Justice Brown about Nehanee's health conditions, but it was no visible use. Brown believed that this little old woman represented anarchy, and by punishing Nehanee she would be deterring other like-minded activists from threatening Brown's misguided interpretation of the rule of law. Within a week of finishing her sentence, Nehanee was admitted into Intensive Care because of lung infections aggravated from conditions she endured in the hands of the courts, conditions worse than our society subjects murderers to. What was Nehanee doing knowingly acting against the court order? Mrs. Harriet Nehanee is guilty of the subversive act of prayer. She was at Eagleridge praying for the creatures that have been destroyed. She was praying for First Nations Land. She was praying for humanity. Harriet Nehanee was praying for justice, a higher justice than the one Judge Brown used to



silence the voice of this elder. We have lost this great leader, but she will not be forgotten.

Nehanee once said that indigenous peoples needed a Malcolm X to revive their pride. Nehanee is that Malcolm X. It is no coincidence that she died on the eve before the first Sunday of Lent, a Christian period where followers of Christ pray and work to come closer to our creator. Nehanee's own people, the Squamish Nation, distanced themselves from her and gave their support to the highway development. A Christian can't help but see a similarity to the story of Jesus being sold out by his own people. Nehanee's death is a horrible tragedy to social justice, but it is not in vain. It is an example of what our system of things does to our prophets. If you stand up for justice, wisdom, truth, and love, the system will crucify you. If you take stewardship of the land seriously, you'll be hanged. If you place the well being of the Earth over obedience to court orders, they'll lock you up, sick old lady or not, in the worst cell in the land; proving nothing beyond that our court system values its own power, and corporate powers, over the well being of the people of this land. If we as a people stand up for seven generations into the future, they as a centralized authoritarian regime will stand against our conscientious action and kill our elders. Nehanee will continue to stand long after her death, stand for non-violence, conscientious objection to injustice and environmental destruction, she stands for a world where corporate interests are not the highest interests. If Nehanee represents Anarchism, a belief that Justice Brown based her sentencing against, then perhaps Anarchism is the political stance that represents conscientiousness.

As we begin the celebration of Lent, I find so much of the prayer I've heard speaks directly to our loss of our elder. "God of Life, Your creative Word echoes through all of creation. Deepen our appreciation for the great diversity of all creation. Guide our human efforts to be good stewards. Inspire our use of human ingenuity and technology so that we may sustain, preserve, and protect the great resources You, God, have placed in our care."

Many other protesters have received jail time and \$5000 fines for their parts in the Eagleridge activism. Betty Krawczyk is due to go to jail for 9-15 months for her part in Eagleridge, due to be taken into custody in the morning of March 5<sup>th</sup> at the Supreme Court Building at Hornby and Nelson. Betty is a close friend of Harriet's, and is also a great grandmother. Betty wrote to Judge Brown pleading for Harriet's health but, tragically, to no avail. Brown has said that she is concerned that these little old ladies represent anarchy, their actions have threatened the powers of the courts, and severe sentences are in order to prevent more people from following the leads of these conscientious citizenry from the bluffs, yet it is sure to do the very opposite. I want to get myself up to see what is left of this delicate eco-system and see if I can get arrested in solidarity with Betty, in memory of Harriet, and in the name of God, the Creator of the land, water, and living things in the land that was once Eagleridge. I'm sure anyone in a relationship with God would come to a similar conclusion.

Betty's court battle is truly something to behold. This little woman standing representing herself, denied a trial by jury, she has, without a shadow of a doubt in my opinion, clearly explained her own innocence and a horrible guilt of the courts for letting itself be used by corporate interests against humanity. Betty was at Eagleridge before the court order, and her motivation for being there was the same as her motivation after the court order was put into action. Betty's argument is that her actions were the same and her motivation was therefore not criminal in intent. She made many arguments, but it was another story that really stuck with the standing room only crowd at the court room; the story of the red legged frogs and Harriet Nehanee.

Betty is from Louisiana and her southern drawl was strong and unwavering. After days in court, she began showing signs of fatigue, but the strength of her voice never ceased, and as she told the story of the frogs she started cry, but still she continued: "My lady, it wasn't brought to your attention, but I went another time to Eagleridge Bluffs Parking lot after the injunction just before my third arrest. . . Mrs. Nehanee, the other elder arrested and charged by this court, called me on the evening of June 3<sup>rd</sup> and said she had to go to the Bluffs to say prayers for the dead



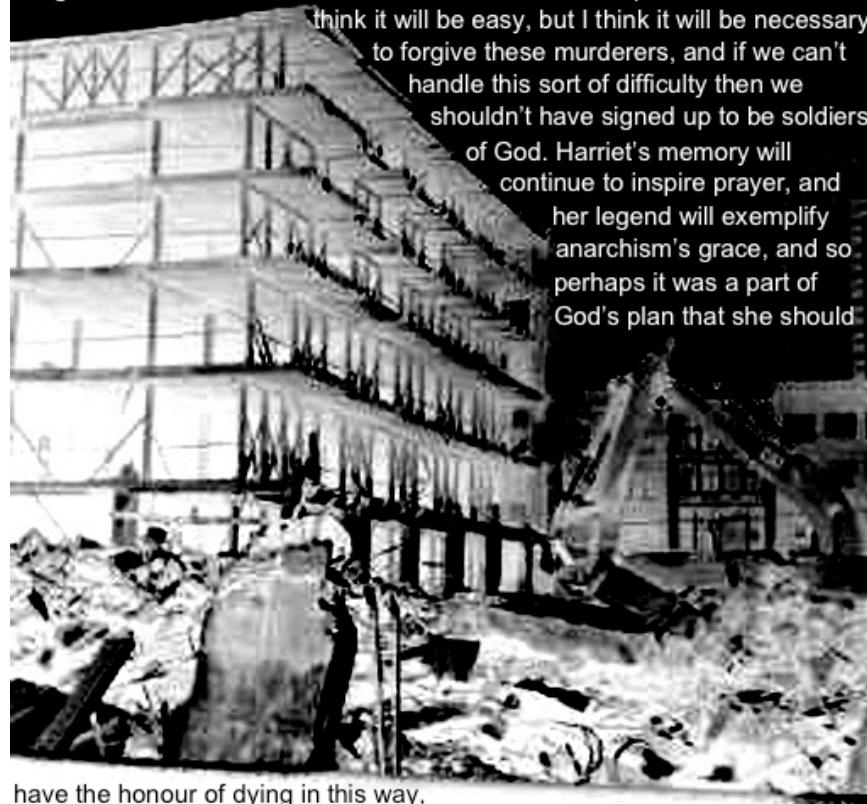
and dying creatures in the Bluffs due to the logging and blasting up there. . . she started talking about the red legged frogs in the Bluffs wetlands and she especially had to say prayers for the red legged frogs. . . She said that red legged frogs only live in the wetlands and they signify life because that's where we all came from, the wetlands, and so the red legged frogs also signify life to humans, and that in the Pacheenacht belief when the last red legged frog dies all of humanity will die also." They did go and say prayers for the frogs, and the cops decided not to arrest them even though they had received orders to. Could it be that the officers recognized the benevolence of this action? I always thought that the Criminal Code was supposed to protect benevolent actions in the name of the creator, but it looks like in this case God worked through the consciences of these officers charged to protect these lands from protesters. Sometimes, maybe, God works through the police.

Harriet has gone to a better place. She has been united with that spirit of justice for which she fought hard for during her righteous life, a life that stands as an example for us all.



Our sympathies belong to those that survive her, such as Betty, who has lost her close friend to the court that is about to send her away for a lengthy prison sentence. A vigil is scheduled for this Friday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of March, and it is very certain that this will not be the last such vigil. But we must work for an end, and end to innocents dying because of an irrational fear of anarchy, an end to concern for the land being considered criminal, an end to this system of things. And when we get to this place we will have to forgive Judge Brown and all those that had a hand in Harriet's persecution. I don't

think it will be easy, but I think it will be necessary to forgive these murderers, and if we can't handle this sort of difficulty then we shouldn't have signed up to be soldiers of God. Harriet's memory will continue to inspire prayer, and her legend will exemplify anarchism's grace, and so perhaps it was a part of God's plan that she should



have the honour of dying in this way, the honour of dying in the service of God's master plan. However the court decides to define anarchy versus the rule of law, Harriet Nehanee's life was and is living proof that the anarchists are the good guys. <

## The Church: called to repentance; called to prophesy

Religious Task Force on Central America



Honouring the prophetic witness of Archbishop Oscar Romero to the churches of the Americas on the anniversary of his martyrdom in El Salvador, March 24.

“A church that suffers no persecution but enjoys the privileges and support of the things of the earth - beware! - is not the true church of Jesus Christ. A preaching

that does not point out sin is not the preaching of the gospel. A preaching that makes sinners feel good, so that they are secured in their sinful state, betrays the gospel's call.” (1/22/78).

God of justice, we repent the sin of our church when it fails to denounce injustice in our world and to call its people to repentance and conversion.

“When the church hears the cry of the oppressed it cannot but denounce the social structures that give rise to and perpetuate the misery from which the cry arises” (8/6/78).

God of the prophets, we pray for ourselves and our church that we might become prophets of justice and life to our world.

“The church would betray its own love for God and its fidelity to the gospel if it stopped being . . . a defender of the rights of the poor . . . a humanizer of every legitimate struggle to achieve a more just society . . . that prepares the way for the true reign of God in history” (8/6/79).

God of love, may we and our church become tools in your hands to help prepare the way for your reign in history. Amen. <

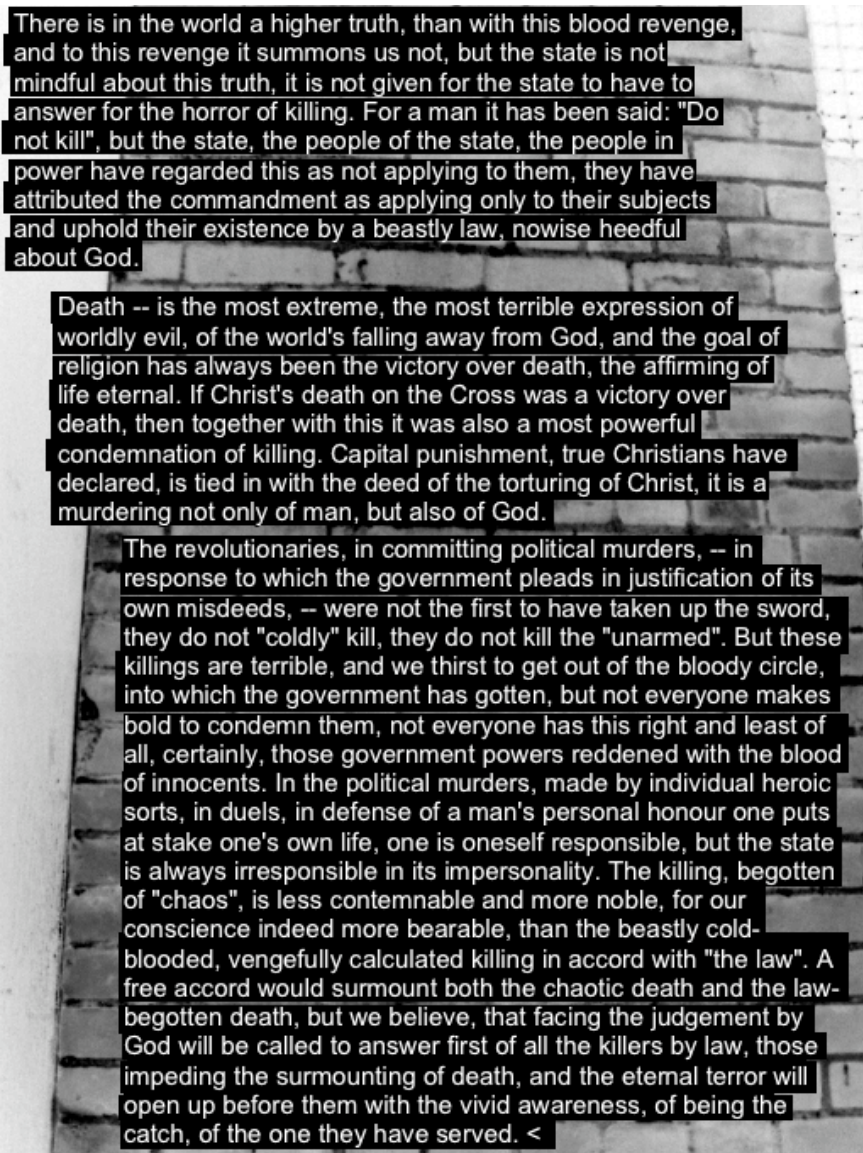
## Capital Punishment and Killing

N. A. BERDYAEV, 1906

The blood, which the Russian government is spilling, the murders which it is committing, cannot be adduced as under the juridical institution of capital punishment. This criminal institution long since already has been acknowledged as inexpedient by the science of criminal law, long since already the moral conscience of mankind has been revolted by it. But the horror, which occurs at present, cannot be adjudged from a juridical point of view as somehow an out of place argument against the death sentence, and indeed this question is too elementary. A counter-revolution of black death has descended upon Russia, it has adopted a terroristic tactic, before which pale all the revolutionary terrors of the world, and killing has become its chief, its almost sole weapon. All the black and beastly forces of the land are taking revenge, because the godless kingdom has set them loose and because, certainly, they have been called forth by history in response to its age-old misdeeds. The counter-revolutionary terror, knowing no limits, a beastly viciousness, the organised murdering of the defenseless -- here is what they call these days amongst us capital punishment. Committing these misdeeds is a state power, passing itself off as Christian.

It has been said: "Those taking up the sword, will perish by the sword". This was said for the state, since the state not only was the first to have taken up the sword, having been begotten in bloody killings, but it also elevated the killing into law, it admitted death as one of the laws of life. It is known, that capital punishment developed historically out of the blood feud, that the state out of concern took upon itself the task to organise retribution, having transformed it into something impersonal. The elements of revenge in the blood feud -- are irrational, in it is stirred up a primordial chaos, but this chaos is infinitely more noble and holier, than the organised, mindfully deliberate, consciously-bestial retribution of the state, than its monstrous impersonalism. Death is something terrible and killing something reprehensible, but what can be said about death, elevated into a law of life, about killing, organised consciously by the masters of life in the name of upholding an illusory order of affairs within it.





There is in the world a higher truth, than with this blood revenge, and to this revenge it summons us not, but the state is not mindful about this truth, it is not given for the state to have to answer for the horror of killing. For a man it has been said: "Do not kill", but the state, the people of the state, the people in power have regarded this as not applying to them, they have attributed the commandment as applying only to their subjects and uphold their existence by a beastly law, nowise heedful about God.

Death -- is the most extreme, the most terrible expression of worldly evil, of the world's falling away from God, and the goal of religion has always been the victory over death, the affirming of life eternal. If Christ's death on the Cross was a victory over death, then together with this it was also a most powerful condemnation of killing. Capital punishment, true Christians have declared, is tied in with the deed of the torturing of Christ, it is a murdering not only of man, but also of God.

The revolutionaries, in committing political murders, -- in response to which the government pleads in justification of its own misdeeds, -- were not the first to have taken up the sword, they do not "coldly" kill, they do not kill the "unarmed". But these killings are terrible, and we thirst to get out of the bloody circle, into which the government has gotten, but not everyone makes bold to condemn them, not everyone has this right and least of all, certainly, those government powers reddened with the blood of innocents. In the political murders, made by individual heroic sorts, in duels, in defense of a man's personal honour one puts at stake one's own life, one is oneself responsible, but the state is always irresponsible in its impersonality. The killing, begotten of "chaos", is less contemptible and more noble, for our conscience indeed more bearable, than the beastly cold-blooded, vengefully calculated killing in accord with "the law". A free accord would surmount both the chaotic death and the law-begotten death, but we believe, that facing the judgement by God will be called to answer first of all the killers by law, those impeding the surmounting of death, and the eternal terror will open up before them with the vivid awareness, of being the catch, of the one they have served. <

## A CALL TO ACTION

*The DRIVE Movements campaign to end prisoner abuse*

By Steven Woods

Look, here's the deal. We really need your help. The situation is so messed up back here, and has been for the last 7 years... You've read our writings. So you know. You know how this system crushes our lives, how spirits are destroyed. I've seen people killing themselves just to escape this hell.

I know it angers you... I can feel your rage as clearly as you can feel my pain. And I can see how a lot of you can feel so powerless... I know. I feel that powerlessness ten fold. But my comrades and I are doing every thing we can think of to fix this problem... Can you say the same? There really isn't much that we can do. We can resist, show our displeasure through defiance and opposition... but without you that's not going to change much.

You have all the power to make things change. So we need you right now, more then ever. I can see that you WANT to help us... You participate in our letter writing campaigns, fast in solidarity with us, petition for change... But as you can see, it's not nearly enough. So we are calling on you, comrades and friends, to make a further commitment to help us change the state of our lives.

The DRIVE Movement is looking to start a campaign directly against those responsible for the deplorable conditions on Death Row, in the hopes that sustained and creative direct action against these individuals, and the companies they represent will cause them to change policy and give us back what they've taken from us. Our only hope is a dedicated civil disobedience movement out there in the world, we've tried everything else.

Thousands of you view our website... People all over the world express the desire to see things changed. It's time to make things change. And we need your help to do it. So I want you to sit and think about what you believe and what you've read... give it some serious thought.

I'm not asking for one or two protests. I'm asking for whatever it takes to accomplish our objectives. It's going to take some serious dedication and activism, serious sacrifice - time, money, maybe a little freedom... but I don't feel that it is too much to ask. Thousands of you express the desire to help us. It's time to show us you mean it. In the coming days, we will outline our goals and objectives... provide specific examples of action, and seek to organize this as a serious campaign. All I'm asking at this time is for you to think about joining the struggle and committing yourselves to action.

This is a call to arms. We need you to join the DRIVE Movements campaign to end this abuse.

It's time to step up and fight!  
In Struggle and Solidarity,

Steven Woods  
Polunsky Death Camp  
*for more info visit*  
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## Liberty and Justice for All

By Logan Laituri

I recently visited the Liberty Bell in Philadelphia, PA. The walkway leading to the actual display builds the visitor up in awe and inspiration; they are reminded how this object of their attention is a beautiful reminder of this country's esteemed past and heritage. Many people stopped to read various inscriptions and historical references to the Bell. At the entrance to the building that houses the Liberty Bell, there is a verse from Leviticus in bold letters; "Proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants." For a new student of biblical history, which I playfully fancy myself, this had a slight impact to me. Isn't that an awesome thing; Liberty? Have we, as a nation, been asked by God to proclaim liberty throughout the land? Does this explain America's colonialism? Is this why we have vested economic interests spread through the entire world; to proclaim liberty and justice for all? I had to look up this verse; to dwell on it, to meditate on it. I didn't have my Bible on me, so it had to wait. Meanwhile, I continued on my way toward the actual bell. I learned that it had been cracked nearly since its creation in 1751, but that modern science had devised a way to keep it intact in order to avoid further damage or even collapse. The crack as it appears now is rumored to have been made on Washington's death in 1846. I almost felt pity for it; the frail bell had been clinging to what was left of its structural integrity for nearly its entire being. I took some pictures, had a few pleasant thoughts and moved on.

When I got back to where I was staying, I looked up Leviticus 25:10. Wait a minute. The passage at the display was only an abbreviated version of a longer verse! Here is the passage in its entirety:

"Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan."



Not quite a harkening call to go out and plant our beliefs through the rest of the world. To comment briefly about the Jubilee year; this was actually a time for all of God's people to release each other from debt and free slaves who were serving to pay off debts to their masters. The Jubilee is what Jesus proclaimed at one of his earliest sermons in Nazareth (they ran him out of town and nearly threw him off a cliff!). I was overwhelmed by a sense of irony; the Jubilee was one of the Mosaic traditions that the Jews did not practice with much consistency. To do so meant that all the



wealthy Jews would lose their capital every 7 and 49 years. The moral duplicity of having such an obviously redemptive passage inscribed on one of the symbols of a nation that declared that by destroying massive areas of Iraq and Afghanistan we were "liberating" these nations was appalling.

Jim Wallis, a 'progressive' Christian voice against the fundamentalism that has been coursing through the veins of our nation lately, claimed in his book "Call to Conversion;"

"Nations tend to demand total allegiance. They then become idolatrous and rebellious against the will of God. Even at its best, a government cannot act completely according to the justice of God because no nation, except the church, confesses Christ's rule as its foundation."

When I read this, I was struck by the truth contained in it. I had been exposed to it first hand; I have been accused of aiding the 'enemies of America' and straying from the path of God because I would not assist the Army in its mission of fighting the nation's wars. How could this be, I wondered, if God is the only entity I am to swear unswerving allegiance to? Is Nation (or 'Empire') an equal of God? A stand-in? Does America speak for God?

Eisenhower, in his farewell speech to the country at the conclusion of his distinguished presidency, warned us of an ominous machine that threatened to take the US captive, if we were not careful to resist it. The machine: the 'military industrial complex.'

"This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence-- economic, political, even spiritual-- is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government. We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications."



The former president, and war hero, went on to describe our folly in consciously deciding to build our nation henceforth upon the strength of our armed forces; placing idolatrous faith in our tanks and, even worse, in our very soldiers (trusting in 'the multitude of [our] chariots and the great strength of [our]

horsemen,' as spoken of in Isaiah 31:1). This career soldier, who expressed a "definite sense of disappointment" in hindsight toward the performance of his duties, thought it decidedly unwise to tempt the rest of the world into an arms and militarism race by essentially drawing the starting line. He closed with an appeal that we, as a nation be "confident but humble with power," and be able to "come to live together in a peace guaranteed by the binding force of mutual respect and love." Perhaps good ole Ike was a bit of a prophet...

In my six years in the military industrial complex, I have seen many leaders arrogantly (though I hope it has more to do with innocent ignorance) twist scripture to proudly, and perhaps mistakenly, align their own political agenda with Christian teaching. I have seen first hand the faith many soldiers place in commanders, their own weapons, or the bombs that fall from the air at the squelch of a radio transmission. They march boldly forward; weapons in hand and helmet securely fastened to their noggins. Jesus said "fear not He who can destroy the body but cannot destroy the soul (Matt. 10:28). What safety does a weapon grant but a false sense of it? What amazes Jesus above anything else is always faith. He is awestruck by it because it is so beautiful in the sight of God, in fact it is pretty much all he asks of us. Faith is trust, and trust is love. God demands it all, just as He offers to us. No nation can substitute.

This is idolatry, to place ANYTHING on the altar of God that does not belong; an oath, a flag, a president. Yes, we are to be subservient to Empire, but only insofar as it does not ask us to place itself above the Lord our God. We pay taxes, suffer through jury duty, and often we serve in the military. However, nothing may take the place of God or ask us to sacrifice our obedience to Him. This is what the age of Martyrs is about, and what prophets preached about; to never allow anything to take from God what is rightfully His, our ultimate allegiance to Him. As for obedience; we must obey Man only as long as it does not compromise what Jesus has taught us. A.J. Muste wrote in the essay 'Of Holy Disobedience;'

"So that by killing by order of your commander you are a murderer as much as the thief who kills a rich man to rob him. He is tempted by money, and you by the desire not to be punished, or to receive a reward [such as praise or recognition]. A Christian cannot surrender his conscience into the power of another man, no matter by what title he may be called."

Just because a man makes a command, by its own right it is not necessarily moral or justified. Temporal authority does not absolve anyone of spiritual responsibility.

God spoke morals into being; He is the final authority on what is 'right.' He elaborates on it in the Gospels when he commands us to pray for those who persecute us and to do good to those who harm us; Deuteronomy 18:18-19 tells us that Jesus speaks directly for God the father, and what he will do to those who disobey – "...I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command them. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account."

The temptation account in Luke reminds us that Satan has been given all the kingdoms of the Earth; more specifically, their authority and their splendor (Luke 4:6). They are his to do with as he chooses. So when a nation of the world asks me to go to war, I must ask myself how I am to involve myself as a soldier first of God. It is to His kingdom that I am a citizen above any citizenship I may hold on earth.

The whole of humanity are but tenants upon His property, His children were aliens in a foreign land. Ephesians 2:19 goes on to say we "are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household." When I ally myself with the world and allow myself to be thrown into the maelstrom of war as a participant, I fear to do so is to be precariously close to disobedience toward God. James has a rousing condemnation of war ("What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. [4:1-2]"), then immediately follows it with an even harsher reminder of where our allegiance must lie; "don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. (4:4)"

I am brought back to our poor Liberty Bell and its symbolic irony

This bell represents so much to us as a nation; freedom, liberty, justice for all. In a way, it (among other national icons) defines and identifies us; when we see that bell in our mind, we may as well be thinking of our very country. However, what does it represent to a

visitor from another country; perhaps a pregnant mother who works in a South American sweatshop producing Sony electronics components, or a young,



ethnically humiliated and frustrated Arab Muslim man, or an Iraqi orphan? They might be reminded that the Bell is intrinsically flawed in its very design. It has been that way since nearly its creation in the late 1700's. It takes a complex system of levers and tension just to keep itself in one piece. The bell's structural integrity is in serious doubt if it is separated from a foreign device that provides unseen support within the Bell itself. The weight of the Bell is completely reliant upon a foreign force; a force which the average American is utterly unaware and blissfully ignorant of, lest they peek under its skirts to lay their eyes upon its dark undercarriage. When these people see Our Liberty Bell, in their mind they may as well be thinking of our very country. Heaven forbid they open their mouths and expose the truth behind the red, white and blue curtain.

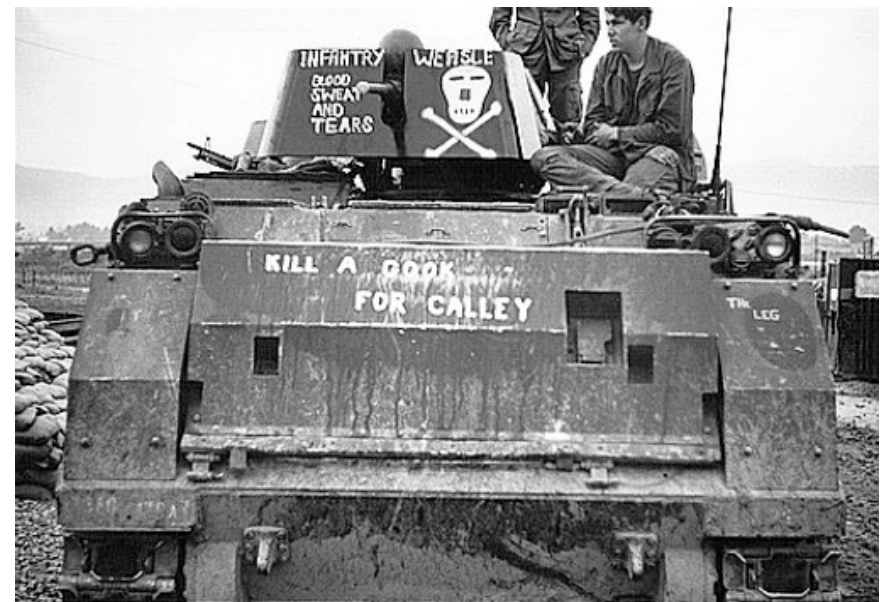


How dare I question the moral character of such a great country? I must admit, I am not the first, nor will I be the last. Many came before me, some of their names; Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Jonah, Amos; the list goes on. I am nobody to speak, let the authority of the Bible speak for itself; Jeremiah 34:17 holds the grim judgment for those called upon to "proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants (Leviticus 25:10a)" and fail horribly at being the stewards of Liberty for all the inhabitants of the earth;

"Therefore, this is what the LORD says: You have not obeyed me; you have not proclaimed freedom for your fellow countrymen. So now I proclaim 'freedom' for you, declares the LORD – 'freedom' to fall by the sword, plague, and famine. I will make you abhorrent to all the kingdoms of the earth."

I pray for those who would forget that we must see the entire global community as our family, because I fear that the Father may not see them that way in return. By our own judgment we will be judged. Let us remember Sodom's sins as written in Ezekiel 16:49 – "She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy." As a nation, let us repent of our political arrogance, economic obesity, and lack of concern for our fellow man. Let us be as the publican Jesus describes, not as the Pharisee, in Luke 18:9-14. Let us remember that Jesus looks down on those who are "confident of their own righteousness." Let us beat upon our breast in humble repentance.

May God have mercy on us sinners. <



## Missing the Point

A sermon written by J. Barrett Lee

John 7:14-31

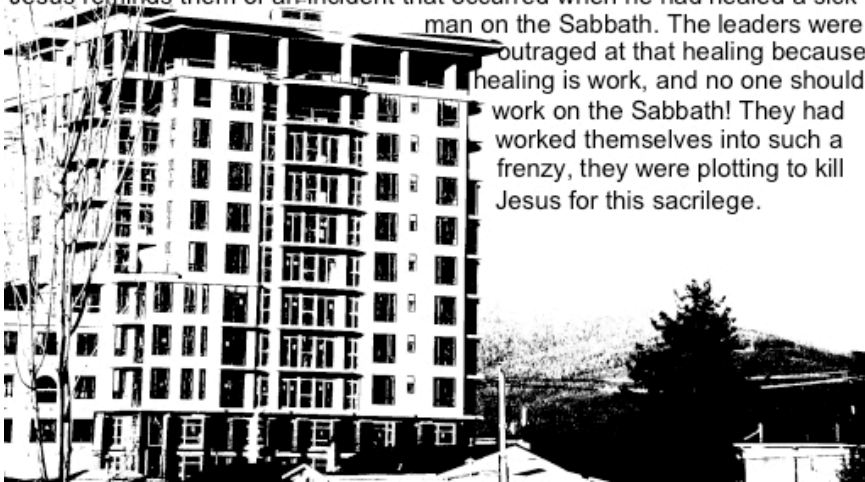
"Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment." The words I say, I seek to say in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight O Lord, our strength and our redeemer.

I'd like to begin this morning by giving you a riddle: Mr. Jones is a clerk in a butcher shop and has two children. He is six feet tall and wears a size thirteen shoe. What does he weigh? The answer is: Meat. A butcher weighs meat!

You see, what makes this riddle difficult is that it's easy to miss the point by focusing on the wrong thing. And that's exactly what the religious leaders are doing in today's gospel text. They are missing the point by focusing on the wrong things.

The scene opens during the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, an annual festival recalling the forty years when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. In the middle of this festival, Jesus stands up and makes some very serious accusations against the religious leadership.

Jesus reminds them of an incident that occurred when he had healed a sick man on the Sabbath. The leaders were outraged at that healing because healing is work, and no one should work on the Sabbath! They had worked themselves into such a frenzy, they were plotting to kill Jesus for this sacrilege.



You see, the religious leaders were trying to protect their traditions and way of life. I guess you could say they were the champions of "Family Values" in their day. If people were allowed to go around doing work on the Sabbath, that could erode the very fabric of their society!

So the religious leaders' primary concern was for their standards of tradition and decency. And they were willing to kill to protect those standards.

On the other hand, Jesus' primary concern is for people. He was willing to heal a sick person, even if that meant breaking with his people's standards of tradition and decency.



I am reminded of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose birthday we just celebrated a few weeks ago. Dr. King was also willing to break with standards of tradition and decency. He lived in a time when racial segregation was considered

proper. Even in churches, people were taught that the Bible condoned segregation and racism. But Dr. King took a stand against all that. He refused to believe that the God of the Bible would want his children to be divided because of the color of their skin. And thank God that he did.

Going back to our text, I think it's important that this scene takes place during the Feast of Tabernacles. Like I said, this festival recalled the time when the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness. Out there, they were dependent on God's daily guidance in a pillar of cloud and fire. They were also dependent on God's daily provision of Manna for food. Ironically, here they are, settled in the Promised Land, dependent on



their memories of God's guidance and providence in the past, but totally blind to God's guidance and providence in the present in the person of Christ. They were missing the point because they were focusing on the wrong things.

Jesus taught that people are more important than piety. The quality of our relationships (with God and our neighbors) is more important than the purity of our religion. Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that theology and tradition are bad or unimportant, but I am saying that they're secondary. The most important thing, according to Jesus, is to love God with all our heart and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Jesus is focused on matters of the heart, while the religious elite are focused on maintaining their pious appearances. Jesus exposes their hypocrisy, "Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment."

The sad thing is that when we try to keep up pious appearances at the expense of relationships, we lose both. Tradition becomes shallow repetition at best, and elitist and oppressive at worst. But if we do the reverse, if we value the quality of our relationships over the maintenance of our pious appearances, then we gain both. The prayers we pray, the Bible we read, and the Eucharist we receive all take on a deeper and truer meaning.



So how do we do this in our day? How do we value the quality of our relationships over the maintenance of our pious appearances? Well, I already spoke about Martin Luther King, Jr. There are others too, people who have changed the world through their commitment to loving God and their neighbors. There's Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the civil rights leader in South Africa. There's Bono, a famous Christian in the music industry who has devoted his life to halting

the impact of AIDS in Africa through a campaign that aims to "Make Poverty History". These people have changed and are changing the world. Maybe some of you here this morning will go on to change the world one day.

But what about the rest of us? Most of us will never attain celebrity status, write books, or visit the White House. We have only our small corner of the world in which to make a difference. Well, I'd like to remind you of something that Mother Teresa of Calcutta, another world-changer, once said, "No one can do great things. We can only do small things with great love." So what are the small things that we can do with great love?

We can choose to value the quality of our relationships in the decisions we make every day. We can reach out to that lonely person we see in our neighborhood, at work, or in church. We can write a letter of appreciation to a doctor, or a teacher, or a parent, or a priest who has bent over backwards in caring for us. We can take time out of our day to listen while a friend shares a burden that is too heavy to bear alone. We can swallow our pride and say "I'm sorry" or "I love you" to that child or spouse who has been waiting far too long to hear those words. These things, these relationships are the very substance of our faith. And if we focus on these things, we will find that we haven't missed the point.

Instead, we will find ourselves growing day by day in the knowledge of the depth, height, length, and breadth of the love of God for you, for me, and for the whole world.

## ***We Believe So We Speak***

2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians 4:13

N. A. Berdayev's essay Capital Punishment and Killing © 2002 by translator Fr. S. Janos. First publication of article was in the 1906 anthology, "Protiv smertnoi kazni" ("Against the Death Penalty"), Moscow; 2nd edition Moscow 1909. Republished 1989 in "Smertnaya kazn': za i protiv" ("The Death Penalty: For and Against"), Iuridicheskaya literatura, Moscow. It is reprinted from [www.berdayev.com](http://www.berdayev.com)

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Thank you for reading, we hoped you enjoyed it.  
Chris Rooney, and Karl Germyn  
Editors, The Christian Radical